



Preparing for Retirement

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Save Yourself a Trip by Visiting Social Security Online

By Paula Turley, Social Security Assistant District Manager in Montgomery

Here are some of the things you can do if you visit Social Security Online at www.socialsecurity.gov. You may link to Social Security through the RSA Web site as well at www.rsa-al.gov.

Apply for benefits. You can apply for Social Security retirement, spouse or disability benefits over the Internet. If you are applying for disability benefits, you will need to complete the disability report, which is also available online. Need to take a break or look for some records to answer your questions? That is just fine with us. You can leave the application partially completed and return at any time to complete your application or report. After you have applied, you can check back online for the status of your application.

See if you qualify for Social Security. You can use our online Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool, or BEST, to see which kind of benefits you might be eligible to apply for. Just answer a series of questions and find out whether you are eligible for retirement, disability or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. You can even find out whether you might be eligible for Medicare benefits. All of this can be done by completing one simple questionnaire, and it only takes about 5–10 minutes.

Request a Statement. Every year Social Security sends a *Social Security Statement* to all workers age 25 or older. It arrives about three months before your birthday. Your *Statement* includes a detailed report of your earnings over the years as well as an estimate of benefits you would receive upon retirement or disability. It also includes an estimate of how much your family would be eligible for in survivor benefits if you die. If you cannot wait for your regularly scheduled *Statement*, go online! Request a *Statement* online and Social Security will mail it to you within 2-4 weeks.

Find the Social Security office closest to you. There is so much you can do online, but sometimes you may want to talk with a Social Security representative face-to-face. If that is the case, your first step is to visit our online field office locator. Just type in your ZIP code and find the Social Security office closest to you.

Get a password. If you already get Social Security benefits, there is so much more you can do online if you have a password. With a password, you can check the information and benefit amounts in your Social Security records and change your address, telephone number or direct deposit account information without leaving the comfort of your home.

This is just a sample of the many services now available online from Social Security. So whatever your business with Social Security may be, check out our Web site and visit “Online Claims and Services” at www.socialsecurity.gov.

Prepared by the Communications staff of the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

To have your questions answered in “Preparing for Retirement”, please address them to:

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www.rsa-al.gov